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No One Permanent

David Lawrence's report on this page today leaves unanswered the question of what happens to a country's intelligence service if its chief, and perhaps the sole possessor of all its secrets, dies. We share the hope of the Europeans quoted that the Central Intelligence agency reorganization will not be either half-cocked or drastic, but the inevitability of reorganization cannot be denied. Mr. Dulles cannot be there forever.

It is true, we think, that an intelligence organization has to function according to a set of rules differing in many ways from the operation of normal agencies and bureaus. It is impossible to set up a completely trustworthy organization in a short space of time. Once a good organization is established, it must be preserved. This means that many of the employees must never be identified and some of the money spent can never be accounted for.

Facts such as these arouse the envy of other agencies and with it, their occasional unfriendliness and opposition. It is probably true that other agencies tried to shift some of the blame for their own mistakes to the C. I. A. in the Cuban fiasco; it is also probably true that the C. I. A. did some blundering on its own. There is reason to think the C. I. A. may have inaccurately evaluated the attitudes of the people of other nations in the past.

But only the mistakes in intelligence tend to show up. The successes don't, and most of them can never be disclosed. It is not hard to agree with the appraisal of the European experts that the C. I. A. has developed a fine group, and most people will agree fully that Allen Dulles' knowledge and experience should be utilized as long as it can be. But reorganization in all intelligence bureaus must take place sooner or later, and perhaps it is time for one in the C. I. A. Whatever is done, though, should be most carefully done.

latest Russian complaint, coming at a time when east and west may be approaching talks on Berlin, is reminiscent of the U-2 plane incident in its timing with respect to summit discussions between President Eisenhower and Nikita Khrushchev.

Russian past performances in going beyond accepted territorial limits to shoot down American airforce planes are warning enough that Soviet patrols wouldn't be hesitant to go well beyond the Russian claimed 12-mile limit to attack an unidentified submarine. If some non-Russian submarine probed somewhere near that line, the Soviet patrols might go all out for a kill, particularly if it served a useful cold war purpose for the kremlin. That, no doubt, is a possibility that American military strategists are keeping in mind in the deployment of the Polaris force.

Unless an American submarine were to turn up missing, the Russian complaint can be dismissed as a propaganda foray, designed to mislead the naive and a feint to elicit information.